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## A CANADIAN POET.

MR. WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL was born at Berlin, Ontario, on the first day of June, 1861. His father was the Rev. Thomas Swainson Campbell, a classmate of Edward Blake's at Upper Canada College and Toronto University, and a man of considerable classical learning and taste. His paternal grandfather was also a clergyman of the Church of England, a double first class honor man of Trinity College, Dublin, and a fellow and graduate of the University of Glasgow. Through his mother, a daughter of the late Maj. Francis Wright, of the Horse Guards, London, England, Mr. Campbell is descended from John Berridge, R. A., a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Thus, if there be anything in heredity, the present descendant must surely have been born well-equipped for an intellectual career.

Mr. Campbell began his education at a private school, afterwards attending the University of Toronto, which he left before taking his degree. He took orders in the Church of England, but retired in 1891, and shortly afterwards was appointed to a position in the civil service at Ottawa, where he is still employed. In 1884 he married Mary Louisa, only daughter of the late David Mark Dibble, M.D.

While Mr. Campbell's reputation rests mainly on his work in verse, he has also produced some very creditable prose, chiefly in the nature of short stories. These, however, are buried in forgotten numbers of departed Canadian magazines, and space will not permit of their present resurrection.

Before proceeding to consider Mr. Campbell as a lyrist, it may be convenient here to refer somewhat briefly to his dramatic work. In this he is less well-known than as a lyrical poet, only two of his dramas having as yet been published in book form. These are "Mordred" and "Hildebrand," brought out together in one small volume at Otta-

wa in 1895. "Mordred" is a tragedy, founded on Malory's Arthurian legend. Mr. Campbell, while following the general narrative of Malory, which he condenses into five acts, draws therefrom very different conclusions. To the elder writer Mordred was the personification of evil, deformed in soul as well as in body. In the present drama Mordred at first reveals deep affection for his father, King Arthur; but, on being rudely rebuffed by the king and treated with contempt by his knights, his love is turned to hate; and, encouraged by his evil genius, Vivien, he in the end compasses the destruction of the Round Table. The action of the drama is well developed, as is also the play of mind upon mind. Mordred's intellectual power is cleverly contrasted with the physical strength of the knights, and the ultimate ruin of the latter shown to have been largely due to their too great reverence for mere animal strength, and their contempt for the power of the mind. "Hildebrand" is a much shorter performance. It is a historical tragedy, dealing with the life and character of the famous Pope, his struggle for supremacy with Henry IV. of Germany, and his enforcement of the celibacy of the clergy.

Of these two dramas, the former is more ambitious in every way, and, on the whole, contains the better workmanship. While not perfect in construction, and lacking, perhaps, some of the qualities that go to make up the highest form of drama, it is, unquestionably, a powerful piece of work, and establishes the fact that Mr. Campbell possesses no mean ability in this direction. A more definite opinion can be given only when his further dramatic work has been placed before the public.

A third drama, "The Brockenfiend," imaginative in form, and founded on an old German legend, was published in the *Lounger*, an ephemeral Ottawa magazine of several years ago.

"Daulac" has not, up to the present time, been published, with the exception of the fifth and last act, which appeared in the Christmas number (1898) of *Acta Victoriana*. This

play is founded on the life and character of Daulac des Ormeaux, the hero of the Long Sault. The ruling motive is "to show the shrewdest wiles of an evil and malignant nature opposed to the simple, unsuspecting nobleness of a lofty soul, and defeated by that very nobleness itself."

In addition to the foregoing, Mr. Campbell has completed the manuscripts of three other dramas: one dealing with the period of Charles IX. of France, and the persecution of the Huguenots; the second, placed in Italy, in the sixteenth century; and the last, a subtle study of life during the period of Roman ascendancy. He has also in manuscript a romantic prose drama. All of these are adapted for stage presentation, and will doubtless be brought forward in due course.

Up to the year 1889 Mr. Campbell's work in verse consisted only of a number of poems scattered through the columns of leading magazines of the day. He had contributed, at different times, to the *Century*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, the *Atlantic*, and others. In that year he collected the best of these verses in a book, under the title: "Lake Lyrics." This was favorably received in England and the United States, as well as throughout Canada. It at once placed him among the best of the minor poets of America, and earned for him the title of "The Lake Poet." The deep earnestness of his love for the "mighty, restless lakes" marked him as above the rank of a mere poetaster, and insured serious consideration from those best qualified to judge. His early years had been spent beside Huron's shore, and he naturally became deeply imbued with its ever-varying moods, sparkling in the sunlight, dancing under a midsummer night's moon, wrathfully raging beneath the fierce lash of November storms, or sullenly rolling under a winter sky. His lines are full of color and music, and, rail though we may at the poverty and inherent worthlessness of descriptive poetry in general, one cannot fail, possessing a modicum of imagination, to enjoy thoroughly his delightfully vivid pictures of the great inland seas, where

Mists and fogs in ghostly bands,  
 Vague, dim, moon-clothed in spectral light,  
 Drift in from far-off haunted lands,  
 Across the silences of night.

He takes us to the very heart of the lakes—

. . . miles and miles of waters  
 That throb like a woman's breast  
 With a glad, harmonious motion,  
 Like happiness caught at rest.

In winter, again,

Under the glimmer of stars and the purple of sunsets dying  
 Wan and waste and white, stretch the great lakes away.

Here is a brighter picture:

. . . those glorious, sun-bathed reaches,  
 In a dream of light and mist,  
 Earth-embraced and heaven-kissed.

But it would be impossible to give any adequate selection from the "Lake Lyrics." They must be read in their entirety to be appreciated at their full worth.

A writer in the *Chicago Dial* has admirably summed up the character of Mr. Campbell's work at this period: "The interpenetration of the soul of man and the soul of the physical world may be taken as the predominant thought of his work."

Besides the "Lake Lyrics," this book contains a number of additional poems. Of these, one of the daintiest and sweetest, showing the essential humanity of the poet's nature, is the following:

Little blue eyes and golden hair,  
 Taken all sudden and unaware,  
 Caught in the toils of the drowsy god,  
 Has gone on a trip to the Land of Nod.  
 Half fallen in my lap she lies,  
 With a warp of dreams in her lash-hid eyes;  
 And deep in my heart still broods the prayer:  
 "God bless blue eyes and golden hair."

Probably the finest, strongest, and most finished piece of verse in the book is "Lazarus," a poem founded on the biblical parable.

It is always interesting to know what one poet thinks of the work of another, though not invariably edifying, and I make no excuse for giving the opinion of Miss Ethelwyn Wetherald on "Lake Lyrics:"

To be stirred, lifted up, carried out of ourselves—this is of incomparable importance, and this is what Mr. W. W. Campbell has achieved in his "Lake Lyrics." The impenetrable beauty and tranquillity of the lake region, the majesty of its dawns, the pathos of its twilight, and its sweet summers and wolfish winters—are all here produced by superfine touches that please from their very exquisiteness.

In 1893 Mr. Campbell published his second book of verse: "The Dread Voyage." In this volume, although descriptive poetry is given a place, it is much less prominent than in "Lake Lyrics." The poet is gradually cutting himself free from the Druidic or Nature school of verse. The human note is now the predominating one. At the same time, it may be said that the fascination of the weird and mystical side of humanity has laid perhaps too great hold on him, and gives a certain obscurity to some of his poems—such as the "Dread Voyage" and the "Were-Wolves." Though perfectly legitimate, and possessing many technical fine qualities, these hardly constitute the highest type of verse, and certainly do not represent Mr. Campbell at his best.

The poet also possesses an amiable weakness, shared by many of his fellow-lyrists, of giving favorite words a prominence rather unfair to their synonyms. For instance, the two words "yea" and "ken" crop up persistently throughout his several books of verse. This is certainly not the result of a weak vocabulary; on the contrary, Mr. Campbell's work reveals a very catholic taste in the choice of words. It is, rather, a case of lexicological favoritism.

In "Sir Lancelot" our poet gives a somewhat Tennysonian picture of the great knight—Tennysonian not in a plagiaristic sense, but in the interpretation of the old legend. In "Mordred," on the other hand, it will be remembered that he substituted for Tennyson's idealistic conception one even more realistic and rationalistic than Malory's.

“Unabsolved” is a remarkable dramatic monologue, instinct with intense, restrained feeling. It is based on the confession of a man who went with one of the expeditions to save Sir John Franklin’s party, and who, being sent ahead, saw signs of them, but through cowardice was afraid to tell. He makes confession on his deathbed, and, filled with a terrible remorse, refuses to accept absolution:

Words, words are empty; were life built on words,  
 How rich the poor would grow, the weak be strong; . . .  
 . . . the murderer, red  
 From his foul guilt, would pass to God’s own breast;  
 And all damned things—long damned of earth’s consent,  
 And some dread law much older, far, than we—  
 Would blossom righteous under heaven’s face; . . .  
 He could not be a God and say: “Forgive.”

Yet in the end he sees more clearly:

Yet, back of all, there is some mighty will,  
 Beyond the little dreams that we are here,  
 Beyond the misery of our days and years,  
 Beyond the outmost system’s outmost rim,  
 Where wrinkled suns in awful blackness swim,  
 A wondrous mercy that is working still.

The one poem of Mr. Campbell’s which is probably most widely known is “The Mother.” This appeared for the first time in *Harper’s Magazine*, in April, 1891, and was immediately copied by a great many papers throughout Canada and the United States, receiving very flattering notices. The *Chicago Inter-Ocean* devoted a leading article to it, saying, among other things, that it was “the nearest approach to a great poem which had cropped out in current literature for many a long day.” As a matter of curiosity, this may be compared with what a Canadian writer, Mr. Waldron, said of the same poem:

The wanton repetition of coarse suggestions of the charnel house is not compensated by the mawkish sentiment of the poem, or by the questionable beauty of its scenery.

It is unnecessary to point out, especially to any one who has

read the poem, that the above cannot be dignified with the name of criticism; it is simply vulgar abuse.

“Pan the Fallen” is a lofty theme admirably treated:

I knew a wail that the weird pipes made,  
A look that was far away,—  
A gaze into some far haven  
Whence a soul had fallen down;  
But the mob saw only the grotesque beast  
And the antics of the clown.

While descriptive poetry is not given a first place in this volume, what there is of it is of a very high quality, as instance the following musical lines, from “An August Reverie,” on the flowers of the field:

They are nature’s children, in their faces  
I see that sweet obedience to the sky  
That marks these dwellers of the wilding places,  
Who with the season’s being live and die,  
Knowing no love but of the wind and sun,  
Who still are nature’s when their life is done.

The “Harvest Slumber Song” may be placed beside “Little Blue Eyes and Golden Hair,” as representing the under current of gentleness running through his verse—that which appeals to the heart rather than to the mind. The preëminent lyrical quality and high ethical teaching of Mr. Campbell’s poetry is well shown by a little poem called “Love:”

Love came at dawn, when all the world was fair,  
When crimson glories, bloom, and song were rife;  
Love came at dawn, when hope’s wings fanned the air,  
And murmured: “I am life.”  
  
Love came at even, when the day was done,  
When heart and brain were tired and slumber pressed;  
Love came at eve, shut out the sinking sun,  
And whispered: “I am rest.”

I think it will be seen that the poet has reached a much higher level in the “The Dread Voyage” than in his first book, “Lake Lyrics.” He has thrown off the veil of pessimism which brooded over some of his earlier work, and there is now found in it a more hopeful, optimistic ring.

Since 1893 he has published only an occasional poem in one or other of the leading magazines, and the tragedies already referred to: "Mordred" and "Hildebrand." There is, however, at present in the press of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., the well-known Boston publishers, a new book of verse by Mr. Campbell, under the title: "Beyond the Hills of Dream." This book is the most ambitious piece of work he has yet produced. It contains a large quantity of new work, besides poems selected from the previous books. Of the latter, one—"Lazarus"—is taken from "Lake Lyrics," and the remainder, including "The Mother," "Out of Pompeii," "Pan the Fallen," "Love," "Unabsolved," and several others, come from "The Dread Voyage."

"Beyond the Hills of Dream," it is hardly too much to say, is one of the most important books of verse appearing in recent years on either side of the Atlantic. As "The Dread Voyage" marked an improvement on "Lake Lyrics," even more does the present volume show an advance beyond all Mr. Campbell's previous work. There is in it a seriousness and sincerity of purpose, and the expression of a definite doctrine of life, which, combined with its high technical workmanship, place its author in the forefront of living poets. Especially significant are the selections which are made from his previous books for embodiment in the new one. These are poems dealing definitely with the human side of life, exposing such qualities as love, remorse, devotion, self-sacrifice, pathos. They represent the highest range of the poet's previous achievement, and reveal, above all, that sincerity which is the most important of all qualities in a man-of-letters, and without which his work, though it contain the very fruit of genius, is worth nothing, and can never hope to appeal successfully to the great heart of humanity.

The title poem is an imaginative piece of work, sensuous, and rich in delicate color and haunting music. It is of a quite fairy lightness, and may be compared with "Little

Blue Eyes and Golden Hair," and "The Harvest Slumber Song."

Could we but come to that heart's desire,  
Where the harvests of fancy reap . . .  
Over the mountains of dream, my love,  
Over the hills of sleep.

"Bereavement of the Fields" is a poem in memory of the late Archibald Lampman. It was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* a short time ago, and now appears in the new volume. It is a fine tribute from one poet to the memory of another:

He dreamed like his own summer days along,  
Filled with the beauty born of his own heart,  
Sufficient in the sweetness of his song.

Outside this prison-house of all our tears,  
Enfranchised from our sorrow and our wrong,  
Beyond the failure of our days and years,  
Beyond the burden of our saddest song,  
He moves with those whose music filled his ears,  
And claimed his gentle spirit from the throng,  
Wordsworth, Arnold, Keats, high masters of his song.

In "Peniel" a spirited picture is drawn of Jacob wrestling with the angel. The poem is full of movement and dramatic force. Jacob conquers the angel, and then looking down in wonder at his foe, sees his own face reflected there,

Not as man sees who reads his fellows  
In the dim crowds that pass:  
Nor as a soul may know himself,  
Who looks within a glass,  
But as God sees, who kneads the clay,  
And parts it from the mass.

It is interesting to note, remembering Waldron's sweeping denunciation of "The Mother," that in the latest edition of the poem, in this volume, the only lines to which exception could possibly be taken have been omitted.

"The Vengeance of Saki" should have been written by Pauline Johnson. It is a fiery narrative of the jealousy and hideous revenge of Saki, the Indian woman, whose faithless husband has brought a white captive from the east, and

drives Saki forth from his tent. She broods over her wrongs until madness overwhelms her. In the fulness of her hate she stampedes a herd of wild horses and drives them like a hurricane through the village, over the wigwam of the man she had once loved and the woman she hates with a consuming hatred:

Ha! Ha! it is joy for the hearts that we crush as we thunder!  
 Ho! Ho! for the hate of the winds that laugh to my laughter!  
 Ha! Ha! it is well for the shriekings that pass into silence!  
 As under the night, out into the blackness forever,  
 Rides the wild hate of Saki, the mad snake-woman!

In addition to the serious ethical purpose of this book, there runs through it a new and significant vein—a stirring note of imperialism. The poet sings the unity of the British race. This patriotic strain first finds expression in the jubilee ode, “Victoria,” and is continued through the succeeding poems, “England,” “Sebastian Cabot,” and “The World-Mother,” reaching its most significant note in “The Lazarus of Empire.”

In “Victoria” the poet says:

And we, thy loyal subjects far away,  
 In these new lands that own thy scepter's sway,  
 Betwixt thy royal isle and far Cathay—  
 Across the thunder of the western foam,  
 O good gray Queen, our hearts go home, go home,  
 To thine and thee!  
 We are thine own while empires rise and wane.  
 We are thine own for blessing or for bane,  
 And, come the shock of thundering war again,  
 For death or victory!

Not that we hate our brothers to the south,  
 They are our fellows in the speech of mouth,  
 They are our wedded kindred, our own blood,  
 The same world-evils we and they withstood,  
 Our aims are theirs, one common future good—  
 Not that we hate them, but that there doth lie  
 Within our hearts a golden fealty  
 To Britain, Britain, Britain, till the world doth die.

And thus he addresses “England:”

Not yours alone the glory of old,  
 Of the splendid thousand years,

Of Britain's might and Britain's right  
And the brunt of British spears.  
Not yours alone, for the great world round,  
Ready to dare and do,  
Scot and Celt and Norman and Dane,  
With the Northman's sinew and heart and brain,  
And the Northman's courage for blessing or bane  
Are England's heroes too.

In "Sebastian Cabot" he typifies the British spirit of colonization:

This old Venetian, Briton-born,  
Who held of fear a hero's scorn, . . .  
Whose whole true being nature cast  
Like his own ocean-spaces, vast!

Westward! westward! westward!  
Over the line of breakers,  
Out of the distance dim;  
Forever the foam-white fingers  
Beckoning, beckoning him.

The "World-Mother" is Scotland:

Yea, there by crag and moor she stands,  
This mother of half a world's great men,  
And out of the heart of her haunted lands  
She calls her children home again.

Here is the heart unity that draws the colonies to the mother land.

And, lastly, in "The Lazarus of Empire," we have the corner stone of imperial unity—the representation of the colonies in the councils of the empire. The lesson is forced home by the biting words of the conclusion:

It is souls that make nations, not numbers,  
As our forefathers proved in the past,  
Let us take up the burden of empire,  
Or nail our own flag to the mast.  
Doth she care for us, value us, want us,  
Or are we but pawns in the game;  
Where lowest and last, with our areas vast,  
We feed on the crumbs of her fame?

In "Phaethon" the old mythological tale is put into dramatic verse. Phaethon persuades his divine father to permit him to

Chase the rosy hours from dawn to dusk,  
Guiding his fleeting steeds o'er heaven's floors.

Being mortal, he comes to grief, having aimed too high.  
The old story is of course familiar to every one.

I had marked a number of other suggestive passages in "Beyond the Hills of Dream," but have already gone far beyond the limits laid down, and must leave fuller treatment of the book to other hands.

Before concluding, it may be mentioned that Mr. Campbell's work, lyrical and dramatic, has received very wide notice both in England and in America. It has been praised by such authoritative journals as *Literature*, the *Athenæum*, and the *Westminster Gazette*, in London, and by the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Literary World*, *Bookman*, *Critic*, *Nation*, *New York Post*, and *Overland Monthly*, on this side the Atlantic. Mr. William Dean Howells, Col. Higginson, Mr. Stedman, and other critical writers have spoken of it in terms of the highest praise. Selections from Mr. Campbell's work have also been included in such modern anthologies as those of Stedman, Lighthall, Wetherell, Rand, and Roberts.

It is giving Mr. Campbell nothing more than his due to say that, especially in his latest book, he has produced verses of very high merit, both as to substance and construction. His work contains the qualities that go to make up genuine poetry—that is to say, sincerity, originality, strength, and refinement.

LAWRENCE J. BURPEE.